

Reston Town Center Pediatrics

Constipation

Constipation is the prolonged interval between the passage of stools. Going more than 2 days without a stool is abnormal, except for exclusively breastfed babies. Once children are on a regular diet (age 1 year), the normal range of having stools is 1-3 per day. They should be soft, mushy and of an oatmeal consistency. The passing of stools should be without discomfort or pain. Any child with pain or crying during stool passage or prolonged straining needs treatment with at least dietary changes.

Causes:

- High milk or cheese diet
- Low fiber diet (not many fruits, vegetables or whole grains) and the great white diet
- Postponing or intentionally withholding bowel movements
- Slow GI transit time
- Changing the diet of breastfed infants, such as adding solids or formula

Home Care Advice for Diet adjustment:

Infants over 1 month of age: Give 1 ounce of apple, prune or pear juice per day

Infants over 4 months of age: Add baby foods high in fiber content twice a day, such as peas, beans, apricots, prunes, peaches, pears, or plums.

Children over 1 year of age

- *Add fruits and vegetables high in fiber content such as peas, beans, broccoli, apricots, peaches, pears, figs, prunes, or dates, 3 times or more per day
- *Increase whole grain foods such as bran flakes, graham crackers, oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat, oat bran, lentils and black beans
- *Add fiber to the diet daily
 - If less than 10 years old, give 10 grams of fiber per day
 - If older than 10 years of age, give 15 grams of fiber per day. (This may need to be given as a fiber supplement.
- *Limit dairy products of milk, ice cream, cheese and yogurt to 3 servings per day

Additional Advice

1. Stop toilet training: temporarily put your child back in pull-ups or diapers. Reassure him that the poop will not hurt when it comes out. Positively reinforce the passing of stools and do not pressure or punish your child if they hold back their stools, don't want to sit on the potty or resist toilet training. Remember your child has 100% control over this activity
2. Establish a regular bowel pattern by sitting on the toilet for 10 minutes after meals, even if your child does not "feel like they need to go" but do not force them to sit.
3. Use warm water for rectal pain as the warmth helps relax the anal sphincter and release a stool. Sit in a warm bath to reduce straining.
4. Hold your baby upright as it is difficult to pass a stool lying down. Sometimes holding the knees against the chest in a squat position helps.
5. For school aged children, watch the 5 ½ minute video www.youtube.com: "The poo in you".

Expected course:

Improvements in the diet usually relieve the constipation. After your child is better, continue the high fiber, non-constipating diet for at least the next 6 months otherwise the stool will "back up" again.

Call us if:

- *Constipation continues after allowing the dietary changes to take effect for 2 weeks.
- *If you see blood in the stool
- *If your child has significant abdominal pain.*If your child has not had a formed stool, but is leaking loose or watery stool

Constipation Instructions

Clean Out

Day 1-2

MiraLAX

3 tsp of MiraLAX mixed into 4 oz of a clear liquid given every hour for six hours. If there is not watery diarrhea by the end of 6 hours give 4 oz every ½ hour up to 12 hours.

Day 3

If no success with a two-day consecutive cleanout

- Give Senokot ½ tablet every 12-24 hours
- Give only one dose of Pedialax liquid stool softener or one Pedialax chewable tablet

Maintenance

- Give MiraLAX ½ capful in 4 ounces of a clear liquid every day. Increase or decrease the dose by ¼ capful every 2 days to achieve 1-2 soft, mushy, oatmeal consistency stools.
- If fully toilet trained, sit on the toilet for 5-10 minutes twice a day after meals.
- Drink 4 ounces of mostly water, (some milk is ok) every 2-3 hours throughout the day and stop drinking 2 hours before bed
- Eliminate all caffeinated drinks
- Sticker calendar for positive reinforcement if necessary
- Add whole grains to the diet
- Limit dairy to no more than 3 servings a day, no more than 16 oz milk per day
- Increase the daily fiber intake to 10 grams daily if less than 10 years old or 15 grams daily if more than 10 years old
- Eliminate all chocolate and soda
- The sugar in foods should be less than 12 grams per serving
- Continue this maintenance regimen for 2-3 months.
- Contact us if this regimen is not working after 4 weeks and the constipation continues

